

Rural & Frontier Health Division Update

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Welcome to the second issue of the "Rural and Frontier Health Division Update!" This newsletter is provided as an informational source on activities involving the programs and services within the division. Comments and/or suggestions are welcomed and may be addressed to WDH-RFHD@health.wyo.gov.

Office of Rural Health (ORH):

Nurse Education, Practice and Retention Grants: Due date (November 3, 2008) is rapidly approaching for this grant opportunity. Many types of organizations are eligible to apply, and the funding preference includes projects that "meet the criteria for the preference, under at least one of the three conditions, as follows: 1) project substantially benefits rural populations; 2) project substantially benefits underserved populations; and/or, 3) project helps meet public health nursing needs in state or local health departments." Please see the link below for information and application instructions:

<https://grants.hrsa.gov/webexternal/FundingOppDetails.asp?FundingCycleId=CD617CA9-0A3F-4206-8D88-7B738E8282CD&ViewMode=EU&GoBack=&PrintMode=&OnlineAvailabilityFlag=True&pageNumber=1>

Rural Health Outreach Services Grants: The outreach program supports projects that demonstrate creative or effective models of outreach and service delivery in rural communities. We're very happy to report that seven organizations within Wyoming have applied for this grant, with awards to be announced in March 2009.

Niobrara Health and Life Center – Lusk. Purchase a mobile mammography unit to provide services to Niobrara, Weston, and Crook counties.

Wind River Health Systems – Riverton. Use the Berkeley Heart Model as an early intervention for those who are high risk or ethnically predisposed to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, and certain women's health issues.

Crook County Medical Services District – Sundance. Develop a Community Wellness Program with wellness, fitness, and nutritional services for Crook County.

Northern Arapaho Tribal Health – Ft. Washakie. Develop and implement interventions to reduce diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease disparities among Native Americans of the Wind River Indian Reservation.

Eppson Center for Seniors – Laramie. Develop special daytime care services for elders, adults with disabilities, and their families in Albany County.

University of Wyoming – Laramie. Collaborate with Wyoming Medical Center in Casper to expand telestroke pilot program.

Teton County Public Health – Jackson. Implement the Centering Pregnancy Model to bridge the financial barriers to prenatal care in the Jackson area.

Physician Recruitment Grants: The Wyoming Department of Health has awarded grants to five Wyoming community health facilities to support local physician recruitment.

Noyes Health Care Center – Baggs

Crook County Medical Service – Sundance

Niobrara Health and Life Center – Lusk

Washakie Medical Center – Worland

Cedar Hills Family Clinic – Newcastle

“The WDH has awarded grants to five Wyoming community health facilities to support local physician recruitment.”

All together these organizations received awards totaling \$400,000 in state funds. The Office of Rural Health identified the geographic areas of the state with the greatest need, the medical specialties in highest demand and information from applications to make the awards. Selected groups must use the money to recruit a physician to their community. The money may be used for recruiting costs, a signing bonus, moving expenses, and malpractice insurance. Interest in the program was very high across the state as 45 applications were received from 27 interested groups in 19 communities and 18 counties. Selections were difficult due to the definite need identified in each application; and unfortunately some deserving entities could not be funded.

Benefits of HPSA Designations: There are more than 30 federal programs that provide benefits to areas that have been designated as a HPSA and/or an MUA. For example, Pennsylvania has a helpful benefits chart at:

<http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=169&Q=201491>.

While many of these programs are already available to the Dubois clinic (by virtue of the fact that they are a CHC satellite clinic), the continued designation also makes these benefits available to other providers who may want to establish themselves in the area.

Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program:

The new Flex fiscal year started on September 1, 2008. Several new and exciting projects are underway to assist Wyoming's fourteen Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs). The aim of the Flex grant is: 1) knowing what hospitals need in order to improve their performance (financial, clinical, quality, operational, etc.) and then, 2) developing and implementing strategies that will help them improve their performance in a measurable way. A prime example of the Flex grant in action is our sponsorship of Nurse Leadership Training in cooperation with the Wyoming Hospital Association and Laramie County Community College.

The Wyoming Hospital Association launched the Nurse Leadership Training Program in September. “As is the case in many other industries, nurses who have developed significant technical skill are often promoted into management positions – and often without the leadership training they need to succeed in their new roles. The Wyoming Nurse Leadership Training Program is designed to fill that gap. The leadership skills curriculum was developed by Development Dimensions International (DDI), the organization selected by the Wyoming Business Council to provide common curriculum across the state.

The courses will be delivered via the statewide telehealth network. Each of the nine courses will be offered twice in an effort to maximize attendance during the live presentations of the material. The sessions will also be recorded so that nurses can “attend” each course virtually when it’s most convenient, or they can play sessions back to review material in greater detail.

The curriculum includes courses on: 1) Essentials of Leadership, 2) Resolving Conflict, 3) Retaining Talent, 4) Leading Change, 5) Working as a Team, 6) Coaching for Success, 7) Coaching for Improvement, 8) Building Patient Loyalty, and 9) Basic Budgeting and Finance. Additionally, funding from the State Office of Rural Health grant matching funds will support ongoing technical assistance for students as they encounter real life situations.

All 40 seats have been filled, and another round of classes is slated to begin in January 2009.

Boosting Primary Care in Wyoming:

WWAMI is an enduring partnership between the **University of Washington School of Medicine** and the states of Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. The WWAMI name is derived from the first letter of each of the five cooperating states. The program’s purpose is to provide access to publicly supported medical education across the five-state region. Wyoming residents can attend the University of Washington’s Medical School (Wyoming does not have a medical school) at resident cost and if the graduate returns to Wyoming to practice, the state does not require repayment of the difference.

J1 Visa Waivers: Wyoming does participate and did fill all five flex slots this year. We need more primary care providers to apply.

National Health Service Corps: Wyoming does have over 30 NHSC loan repayment participants practicing in the state.

Wyoming Healthcare Provider Loan Repayment Program: Physicians and Dentists are eligible to apply. Emphasis is given to Primary Care (Family Practice, FP with OB, General Practice, Peds, OB/GYN, Internal Medicine, and Psychiatry) are given preference. Awards are also prioritized on areas of the state in greatest need for physicians. Our budget is limited, so it is competitive. The awards are for up to \$90,000 over a three year contract period. Individuals may reapply for another award after the three year commitment. <http://wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/rural/loan.html>.

“Physicians are eligible for up to \$90K over a three-year contract period under the Wyoming Healthcare Provider Loan Repayment Program”

Wyoming Physician Recruitment Program: This program allows entities in the state to apply for up to \$80,000 of state money to use in recruiting physicians. Emphasis is given to

Primary care physicians and this is also prioritized on areas of greatest need. As indicated above, we have recently granted five awards. The money has specific uses--recruitment costs, signing bonus, malpractice, and moving expenses with specific funding limits in each category.

The University of Wyoming sponsors two physician residency programs, one in Cheyenne and the other in Casper.

Additional information on other programs can be viewed on the Office of Rural Health website, <http://www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/index.html>.

Funding Opportunities

Family Planning Services Grants: Application deadline: Applications accepted on an ongoing basis. Grants to provide family planning services.

Rural Development Leadership Network: Application deadline: Applications accepted on an ongoing basis. The Rural Development Leadership Network assists community leaders to strengthen their practical skills, knowledge and credentials while remaining involved in their community development work.

Native American CDFI Assistance Program: Application deadline: December 19, 2008. Awards to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) that direct activities toward serving Native American, Alaska Native and/or Native Hawaiian communities.

Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program: Application deadline: January 15, 2009. Grants to develop integrated home and community-based services and supports for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families by encouraging the development and expansion of effective and enduring systems of care.

Electronic Registration System:

Vital Statistics Services, a program within the Division of Rural and Frontier Health is currently developing a new electronic system to be used in filing vital records to include, birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, amendments, and adoptions. The electronic system will be used by funeral homes, coroners, hospitals, physicians, county clerks, and county court clerks.

Associated data of vital events will be entered into the electronic program to develop permanent records of the events. Because the system is a Web application, this entry can be performed at any computer with Internet access. As signatures will be affixed to records electronically through the use of assigned user identifications and personal passwords, the need to prepare paper documents for ink signatures will be unnecessary. The system will be maintained by the Information Technology Division of the Wyoming Department of Health and will be used to record all vital events by hospital staff, physicians, funeral directors, local registrars, and county officials. Registrants will be able to sign the electronic documents by applying their electronic signatures with no need to physically deliver documents to hospitals, clinics, doctor's or coroner's offices, or funeral homes.

Births occurring away from a hospital setting can be filed using the paper form, if necessary. Also, paternity forms will continue to be paper-based because the physical signatures of the parents cannot be electronic. To incorporate paternities into the electronic registration system is desirable and is being examined to determine possibilities for the near future.

USDA Awards \$15 Million for Telemedicine Improvements at Rural Hospitals**(Oct 27, 2008)**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) last week awarded \$15 million in distance learning and telemedicine grants and loans to six rural hospitals and one telecommunications firm, *AHA News Now* reports. Distributed through the USDA Rural Development office, the grants will fund projects aimed at improving the quality of health care services for rural populations and attracting families and businesses to those regions. For example, Eastern Maine Healthcare System will use an \$800,000 loan and a \$200,000 grant to purchase new software, medical carts, and laptop computers as part of an effort to expand its electronic medical record (EMR) system and promote record-sharing among 18 offices. Meanwhile, Kossuth Regional Health Center in Algona, Iowa, will use a \$537,532 loan and a \$134,382 grant to install a comprehensive EMR filing system that uses high-speed telecommunication lines. According to a release, the Rural Development office has invested more than \$110 billion since 2001 for equity and technical assistance to fund and encourage growth in critical community and technology infrastructure, homeownership, and business development. In addition to this month's grants and loans, the office awarded 47 telemedicine grants in September (*AHA News Now*, 10/24/08; USDA).

Wyoming points of contact for Rural Development grants/loans information are: Del Tinsley, 307-233-6703; Lorraine Werner, 307-532-4880; Alana Cannon, 307-233-6709; and Kim Jacobs, 307-754-9000. Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wy>.

Upcoming Events:

- NRHA Rural Minority & Multi-cultural Health Conference, December 9-12, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- NRHA Rural Health Policy Institute, January 26-28, Washington, D.C.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/